

PROBLEM #3 (24.915)
MISKITU CAUSATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

This problem is concerned with the Miskitu (Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua and Honduras) construction exemplified in (1):

- (1) Yang tuktan ba ra mun-ri kauhw-an.
I child the ACC do-CNF1 fall-PST3
I made the child fall.

The Miskitu construction is the functional equivalent of the English causative represented here in the translation. But the Miskitu causative differs from the English one, and from familiar causative constructions in other languages, in a rather striking way.

In essence, your task will be:

- a) To characterize the manner in which the Miskitu causative differs from its functional equivalent in English (or Romance, Japanese, Turkish, ...).
- b) To discuss the Miskitu causative from the perspective of the Projection Principle, Exceptional Case Marking, and Strict Subcategorization.

You are not actually required to do this, but if you feel impelled to do so, suggest an analysis of the Miskitu causative which is consistent with the principles of grammar which we have been assuming in class. Feel free to propose any analysis you think makes sense, including one which challenges the notion that the Miskitu construction is strictly comparable to the causatives of more familiar languages.

Miskitu is a verb-final language. The complement of a verb regularly precedes its governor. Where the latter is a definite NP (including a pronoun), it may be marked for accusative case (ACC), and if first or second person, it is regularly represented by an objective pre-verbal pronominal clitic:

- (2) Yang sula ba ra kaik-ri.
I deer the ACC see-PST1
I saw the deer.
- (3) Sula ba yang ra ai kaik-an.
deer the me ACC me see-PST3
The deer saw me.

Miskitu is an enthusiastic pro-drop language; accordingly the pronouns in the above sentences may be omitted.

- (2') Sula ba ra kaik-ri.
deer the ACC see-PST1
I saw the deer.

(3') Sula ba ai kaik-an.
deer the me see-PST3
The deer saw me.

The accusative case particle ra is often omitted, particularly from indefinites:

(4) Yang sula kum kaik-ri.
I deer a see-PST1
I saw a deer.

While nominal complements regularly precede their governors, clausal complements extract rightward, optionally if infinitival, obligatorily if finite:

(5) Yang [sula kum sab-aia] pliki-sna.
I deer a shoot-INF seek-PRS1
I want (seek) to shoot a deer.

(6) Yang pliki-sna [sula kum sab-aia].

(7) Witin ai wi-sa [plun atk-amna].
he me tell-PRS3 [food buy-FUT1]
He tells me to buy food (lit., ... I will buy ...).

To understand the Miskitu causative, it is necessary to understand the verbal inflections involved in the construction, since these help to reveal the characteristics which are of interest in this problem.

For the sake of discussion, let us divide the causative sentence into two parts, the cause portion, and the effect portion, corresponding respectively to the nonfinal verb and the final verb. In Miskitu, the verb of the cause portion of the construction appears in what has been called the "connexive" (C) participle, which expresses a simple future-nonfuture (CF-CNF) tense distinction. The connexive endings are as follows (1, 2, 3 indicate the three persons, number being neutralized in the Miskitu AGR system; F is future, and NF nonfuture):

CF1	-rika	CNF1	-ri
CF2	-rika	CNF2	-ram
CF3	-ka	CNF3	-(a)n

The verb of the "effect" portion of the causative, i.e., the final verb, is inflected by means of the ordinary finite tense inflections. We will not use the full range of finite inflections in this problem, limiting ourselves to the following (F = nonproximate future; PRS = indefinite present; PST = indefinite past):

F1	-(a)mna	PRS1	-sna	PST1	-ri
F2	-ma	PRS2	-sma	PST2	-ram
F3	-bia	PRS3	-sa	PST3	-(a)n

The parenthetic a indicated for some endings is epenthetic, appearing when the root ends in a consonant. It will be noticed that the CNF endings are identical to the PST endings. The CNF forms, however, neutralize the present-past distinction of the finite system.

We turn now to some examples of the Miskitu causative:

- (8) Yang tuktan ba ra mun-rika kauhw-bia
 I child the ACC do-CF1/2 fall-F3
 I will make the child fall.
- (9) Yang (taim bani) tuktan ba ra mun-ri kauhw-sa.
 I (time all) child the ACC do-CNF1 fall-PRS3
 I (always) make the child fall.
- (10) Yang tuktan ba ra mun-ri kauhw-an.
 I child the ACC do-CNF1 fall-PST3
 I made the child fall.
- (11) Tuktan ba (yang ra) ai mun-ka kauhw-amna.
 child the me ACC me do-CF3 fall-F1
 The child will make me fall.
- (12) Tuktan ba (yang ra) ai mun-an kauhw-sna.
 child the me ACC me do-CNF3 fall-PRS1
 The child makes me fall.
- (13) Tuktan ba (yang ra) ai mun-an kauhw-ri.
 child the me ACC me do-CNF3 fall-PST1
 The child made me fall.
- (14) Witin yul ba ra mun-ka (yang ra) ai sam-bia.
 he dog the ACC do-CF3 (me ACC) me bite-F3
 He will make the dog bite me.
- (15) Yang yul na ra mun-rika plun pi-bia.
 I dog this ACC do-CF1/2 food eat-F3
 I will make this dog eat food.
- (16) Yaptik-i (taim bani) ai mun-an rais pi-sna.
 mother-my (time all) me do-CNF3 rice eat-PRS1
 My mother (always) makes me eat rice.
- (17) Naha pata na (man ra) mai mun-ka siknis tak-ma.
 this food this you ACC you do-CF3 sick become-F2
 This food will make you get sick.

(18) Aisik-i ai mun-an Bilwi-ra wa-ri.
 father-my me do-CNF3 P.C.-to go-PST1
 My father made me go to Puerto Cabezas.

An analysis of the Miskitu causative must come to grips with the fact that the inflection of the cause verb (the non-final verb) is dependent -- that is to say, it is not autonomous from that of the effect (or final) verb; thus, the choice of a connexive form depends on the form of the final verb:

(19) Yang mai mun-ri kauhw-ram (kauhi-sma, *kauhw-ma).
 I you do-CNF1 fall-PST2 fall-PRS2 fall-F2

(20) Yang mai mun-rika kauhw-ma (*kauhwi-sma, *kauhw-ram).
 I you do-CF1/2 fall-F2 fall-PRS2 fall-PST2

Moreover, the connexive forms can only occur as non-final forms in certain constructions, including the causative; the final verb, by contrast, ranges freely in its inflection over the finite forms of the language.

In the English causative construction, the effect verb is clearly subordinate to the cause verb. What, if anything, do the data so far presented suggest about subordination in the Miskitu causative?

A consideration of negated causatives is relevant to this question. The Miskitu negative is somewhat complex, but the basic elements are as follows. The future is formed by simply adding the negative particle apia to the future forms already introduced -- e.g., kauhw-bia apia 'he/she will not fall'. The nonfuture negative is formed by nominalizing the verb (by means of the suffix -ra) and negating that (by means of the suffix -s, yielding -ras, glossed NEG in examples) -- e.g., kauhw-ras 'not fall'. To obtain tense and person oppositions in the negative nonfuture, it is possible to use appropriate forms of the auxiliary verb kaia 'to be' -- e.g., kauhw-ras sna/kap-ri 'I do/did not fall'.

Now consider how negative causatives are formed in Miskitu:

(21) Yang tuktan ba ra mun-rika kauhw-bia apia.
 I child the ACC do-CF1/2 fall-F3 NEG
 I will not make the child fall.

(22) Pasa ba tuktan ba ra mun-an kauhw-ras.
 wind the child the ACC do-CNF3 fall-NEG
 The wind doesn't/didn't make the child fall.

The expressions upla kumi sin, diara kumi sin 'anyone, anything' are polarity items and must appear in the scope of some "operator", such as negation:

- (23) Upla kumi sin ai mun-ka kunin aisa-mna apia.
 person one even me do-CF3 lie speak-F1 NEG
 No one will make me lie.
- (24) Yang upla kumi sin mun-rika kunin aisa-bia apia.
 I person one even do-CF1/2 lie speak-F3 NEG
 I will not make anyone lie.
- (25) Upla kumi sin ai mun-an kauhw-ras.
 person one even me do-CNF3 fall-NEG
 No one made me fall.

Certain verbal forms in Miskitu regularly take infinitival complements. Two such are want kaia 'to want' (lit., 'be (in) want (of)') and traik kaikaia 'to try' (lit., 'try-see', the verb kaikaia 'to see' being used in a number of Miskitu "light verb" constructions), as in (25-6):

- (25) Yang sula kum sab-aia want sna.
 I deer a shoot-INF want PRS1
 I want to shoot a deer.
- (26) Yang sula kum ik-aia traik kaik-ri.
 I deer a kill-INF try see-PST1
 I tried to kill a deer.

The infinitival may be, and usually is, extraposed:

- (25') Yang want sna sula kum sab-aia.
 (26') Yang traik kaik-ri sula kum ik-aia.

The causative construction may also appear in the infinitival form. The location of the infinitival inflection -aia is relevant to the question of the relative subordination of the cause (non-final) and effect (final) verbs in the causative construction:

- (27) Yang want sna [tuktan ba ra mun-rika kauhw-aia].
 I want PRS1 [child the ACC do-CF1/2 fall-INF]
 I want to make the child fall.

The infinitival causative is not favored by all speakers of Miskitu. For many, the final verb must appear in the future in constructions of this type:

- (28) Yang want sna [tuktan ba ra mun-rika kauhw-bia].
 I want PRS1 [child the ACC do-CF1/2 fall-F3]
 I want to make the child fall.

The infinitive generally appears only when the subject of the complement clause is controlled by an argument of the matrix, the future being used otherwise. So why should (28) be preferred over (27) by some speakers? And assuming there is an answer to that question, why is (27) allowed at all? There is another form which is relevant to this question, perhaps, one which is somewhat

mysterious, given the general characteristics of the Miskitu causative. This is the imperative. The imperative of a verb is formed with the suffix -s, as in:

(29) Sula ba ra kaik-s.
deer the ACC see-IMPER
Look at the deer! (Lit., 'See the deer!')

(30) Plap-s.
run-IMPER
Run!

The causative can also appear in the imperative, as follows:

(31) Tuktan ba ra mun-s kauhw-bia.
child the ACC do-IMPER fall-F3
Make the child fall!

In what way might this be seen as inconsistent with the general behavior of Miskitu causatives? Is there any relation between this and the use, by some speakers, of the infinitive in sentences like (27)?

A final problem to be considered in relation to the Miskitu causative has to do with expressions in that language for certain physiological states, as in:

(32) Plun ai dauki-sa.
food me affect-PRS3
I am hungry. (Lit., 'Food affects me.')

(33) Yapa-n mai dauki-sa ki?
sleep-NOM you affect-PRS3 Q
Are you sleepy. (Lit., 'Does sleeping affect you?')

(35) Li di-n wan dauki-sa.
water drink-NOM us affect-PRS3)
We (inclusive) are thirsty.
(Lit., 'Drinking water affects us.')

The experiencer in such expressions is, morphologically speaking, the object of the "affect" verb, as can be seen from the preverbal clitic. The verb itself is inflected for third person subject. Now consider how these expressions are used in the causative construction:

(36) Naha lilkika na ai mun-an yapa-n ai dauki-sa.
this picture this me do-CNF3 sleep-NOM me affect-PRS3
This picture makes me sleepy.

(37) Naha warkka na wan mun-ka li di-n wan dauk-bia.
this work this us do-CF3 water drink-NOM us affect-F3
This work will make us thirsty.

What problems, if any, do these present for an analysis of the causative in Miskitu? What light might they shed?

Before concluding, we point out that the construction at issue here is not limited to the causative, a fact which is relevant to the ultimate analysis of the causative itself. Other uses of the construction are exemplified in the following:

- (38) Aisik-i ai blik-an Bilwi-ra wa-ri.
father-my me send-CNF3 P.C.-to go-PST1
My father sent me to Puerto Cabezas.
- (39) Yang truk kum atk-rika wa-bia.
I car a sell-CF1/2 go-F3
I will sell a car off.
- (40) Aras ba ai platukb-an kauhw-ri.
horse the me push-CNF3 fall-PST3
The horse pushed me down.
- (41) Yang diara kumi sin atk-rika wa-bia apia.
I thing one even sell-CF1 go-F3 NEG
I won't sell anything off.
- (42) Upla kumi sin ai pruk-an kauhw-ras.
person one even me hit-CNF3 fall-NEG
No one knocked me down.
- (43) Bip kum at(k)-s wa-bia.
beef a sell-IMPER go-F3
Sell a cow off!
- (44) Yang want sna bip kum atk-rika w-aia.
I want PRS1 beef a sell-CF1/2 go-INF
I want to sell a cow off.

This concludes the problem set. To repeat, the principle goal here is to contrast the Miskitu causative with that of English, or other familiar languages, and to discuss the Miskitu data in relation to the principles and relations discussed in class -- e.g., the Projection Principle, Strict Subcategorization, and Exceptional Case Marking; and anything else you think is relevant. This process will suggest some sort of analysis, no doubt, but do not feel that you have to come up with a definitive analysis. In this connection, an excellent way to approach the problem would be to set out further questions that you would need to ask about Miskitu in order to test the viability of an analysis that might suggest itself on the basis of the rather limited data contained in this problem -- like a field worker who has a certain amount of data but may need more.